

1 November 1955

TO : Mr. R. W. Komer

FROM : John W. Huizenga

SUBJECT: Attached NSC Working Group Paper on Local Aggression and Subversion

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Memo  
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1. I think this is one of the most sophisticated and best written NSC papers we have seen. Its intelligence groundwork is broadly in accord with what has appeared in NIE's, and there is no need to comment on these aspects in detail.

2. It is possible that in setting up the problem it proposes to deal with the paper has fallen into the natural error of overstating the magnitude of the problem, and consequently into overstating Communist capabilities and intentions with respect to "creeping expansion." (See especially Paras. 5 and 6.) I would not suggest that the text be altered since nobody can say precisely what the magnitude of the problem may be, and in prudence US policy should be armed with a program designed to meet the problem in its extreme form. In the interest of intelligence objectivity, however, the following comments seem to me to be justified:

- a) The paper suggests a little too much the picture of a ceaseless and pressing will to expansion on the part of a Moscow-directed world conspiracy. In fact, Soviet doctrine has provision for periods of pause and consolidation and we may be entering such a period now. On the whole, Communist policy, because it is linked to the security interests of the Soviet state, is more properly characterized as opportunistic than as unceasingly aggressive. The more explicit forms of local aggression which involve, for example, material support for local military action, do after all subject the Bloc to risks which cannot fail to have far-reaching implications for the military and economic policies of Bloc states, and these considerations argue for the kind of cautious opportunism we have in fact seen in the postwar period.
- b) On a related point, the paper seems to me to reflect a one-sided view of the significance of nuclear deterrence. We have in the NIE's occasionally used the expression "mutual deterrence," but this paper seems to imply that only the free nations would be deterred, upon the arrival of nuclear plenty, from taking risks in local situations. Seen from the Soviet side, the danger that a local issue might grow into general war must seem just as real, and

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the argument for caution therefore just as strong. We cannot at this time take it for granted, as the paper seems to do, that the arrival of nuclear plenty will necessarily impel the Bloc to intensified efforts at local aggression.

- c) The paper may also overplay the vulnerability of threatened areas to Communist expansion. In general, Communist subversive capabilities have declined in recent years. To move from subversion to insurrection has not been an easy transition to make. It succeeded in Indo-China because the uprising was against a colonial power and because direct material support was possible. It failed in Greece. The attempt in Korea misfired due to miscalculation of the political and military factors involved including those in South Korea itself. In general, where there is no element of anti-colonial struggle and where direct material support by the Bloc is not possible, it seems likely that the forces of local resistance to foreign-sponsored subversion and insurrection will prove stronger than the paper seems to imply.

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